

# The Continuing Story of the Pentagon Papers

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The Supreme Court's decision to share the "Pentagon Papers" with the world triggered a publishing spree which still hasn't run its course.

How much the reading public has actually gorged itself on the mass of documents, charts, narratives and analyses may be something else.

Predicted one publishing industry wit: "This may well be the most unread best-seller in history."

So far, only the first one on the market actually has become an instant best-seller — and that for just two weeks. Then, the book sellers report, it died.

Already there's some backbiting — the "My edition has more than your edition," sort of thing. One publishing venture has been scratched and there's still one to go. Over all looms the threat of court action, which could spur more sales.

The publishing bonanza has not been limited to the United States. The foreign sale has been brisk, and Bantam Books has sold translation rights to its \$2.25 paperback edition to Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden. A German publisher reported he had 100,000 copies in print.

## Court Ruling

The rush to print began immediately after the Supreme Court on June 30 ruled that the nation's press could publish the secret Pentagon papers and stories about them. The decision not only lifted the judicial ban on the Vietnam series, which the New York Times had begun publishing on June 13. It cleared the way for other newspapers to do likewise, and opened the door to book publication of the material.

That was the signal for the book presses to roll as soon as they had something to roll for. And that wasn't long in coming. By a co-publishing arrangement between Bantam Books and the New York Times, a 678-page paperback with 64 pages of pictures started coming off Bantam's presses on July 7.

It contained an analysis written by four Times men and key documents from the Pentagon papers furnished by Dr. Daniel Ellsberg, a former Defense Department ana-

lyst now under indictment on charges of stealing the documents and keeping them.

A Bantam spokesman said the first printing was originally set for 200,000 copies, but the demand from book stores was so overwhelming that the plant printed around the clock for three days and thereafter for two weeks. There were finally 1.5 million in print. They haven't all been sold, however, although the Bantam man said the book is selling steadily even now. Time was a factor. Probably the Washington experience was typical. In the rush to get the book to the stores, the District News Co. met a plane bearing the books to Washington at 3 a.m. on July 9, according to a Bantam spokesman, and started delivering them the same day.

"It was instant success," enthused a District News official. "We put out 20,000 in one day and reordered 15,000. We put out 52,000 altogether. If we'd had them all in the beginning, it would have been a complete sellout, but part of the books came too late. We estimate we'll get 11 percent returned."

A spokesman for the five Trover book stores said the sale was fantastic while it lasted, "but when it died, it died completely." He said that 90 percent of the sales came in the first two weeks, when it was a conversation piece. A person who had to think for two weeks whether he wanted the book wasn't going to buy it, he explained.

Despite the book's abrupt death, the Trover man said wistfully, "I wish we had one like that every day."

The material presented in the Bantam edition has been expanded with additional background data and analysis to an 896-page hardback book from Quadrangle Books, Inc. That one is on sale for \$12.50 until Dec. 24, when it goes to \$15. It's been selected by six book clubs ranging from the Book of the Month Club (an alternate selection) to Playboy Book Club and the Lawyers' Literary Guild.

## GPO Edition

The next excursion into the Pentagon Papers to hit the street — in a manner of speaking — was the Government Printing Office's 12-volume, 6,995-page set on sale now for \$50. It has been something less than a best-seller.

The Pentagon says what GPO has

published is 95 percent of the first 43 volumes of the 47-volume Pentagon Papers.

What's still classified, according to Pentagon sources, are sensitive diplomatic discourses and various plans and approaches to settlement in Vietnam, as well as the ongoing problems of trying to recover American prisoners of war.

The government edition was ordered printed by the House Armed Service Committee, which got 1,000 sets. Of the other copies, the office of the Secretary of Defense ordered 50 sets, Air Force ordered 15 sets, Navy ordered five, Army three, state 25. Another 525 sets were sent to Federal Depository libraries and 60 sets for international exchange under an agreement with libraries of other countries. The Congressional Joint Committee on Printing ordered 75 sets. As for the public the Superintendent of Documents ordered 500 sets for public sale. They were placed on sale Sept. 27 and the first order came from a law student at Georgetown University. As of Oct. 29, Superintendent of Documents Robert E. Kling Jr. reported he had sold 308 sets so far, and was selling them at the rate of two or three a day.

Since he broke even when 250 had been sold, he happily reported "we're making a little profit for the taxpayers now."

## Gravel Edition

Just about the time government sales were beginning, another controversial additive to the Pentagon Papers publishing boom reached the books stores.

This is the thick four-volume "The Senator Gravel Edition—the Pentagon Papers," published by Beacon Press in Boston. It costs \$45 in hardcover, \$20 in khaki-colored paperback. Senator Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, is the legislator who called a Buildings and Grounds subcommittee of the Senate Public Works Committee into session near midnight on June 29 to read into the record portions of the Pentagon papers. This was before the Supreme Court ruled that the papers could be made public. A Federal court in Boston has been making inquiry into the Beacon Press publication, fought every step by Gravel.

Rather than steering clear of more controversy, Beacon Press has attacked the government edition calling it "misleading," if not useless, as a reference work.

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